

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
For the Montana National Register of Historic Places Program and State Antiquities Database

Montana State Historic Preservation Office
Montana Historical Society
PO Box 201202, 1410 8th Ave
Helena, MT 59620-1202

Property Address: **326 1st Avenue South**

Historic Address (if applicable): **NA**

City/Town: **Great Falls**

Site Number: **24 CA 1530**

(An historic district number may also apply.)

County: **Cascade**

Historic Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

Original Owner(s): **Northland Greyhound Lines, MN**

Current Ownership ☐ Private ☒ Public

Current Property Name: **GTF Transit Transfer Center**

Owner(s): **Great Falls Transit District**

Owner Address: **PO Box 2353
Great Falls, MT 59403**

Phone:

Legal Location

PM: **Montana** Township: **20N** Range: **3E**

SW ¼ NW ¼ NW ¼ of Section: **12**

Lot(s): **6, 7**

Block(s): **370**

Addition: **Original Townsite** Year of Addition:
Unknown

USGS Quad Name: **Northwest Great Falls** Year: **1965**
updated to 1994

Historic Use: **Bus depot and garage**

Current Use: **Bus depot**

Construction Date: **1947** ☐ Estimated ☒ Actual

☒ Original Location ☐ Moved Date Moved:

UTM Reference www.nris.mt.gov/topofinder2

☐ NAD 27 ☒ NAD 83 (preferred)

Zone: **12** Easting: **477326** Northing: **5261206**

National Register of Historic Places

NRHP Listing Date: **2004**

Historic District: **Great Falls Central Business Historic District**

NRHP Eligible: ☒ Yes ☐ No

Date of this document: **April 27, 2010**

Form Prepared by: **Diana J. Painter, PhD**

Address: **3518 N. C Street, Spokane, WA 99205**

Daytime Phone: **(707) 364-0697**

MT SHPO USE ONLY

Eligible for NRHP: ☒ yes ☐ no

Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Date:

Evaluator:

Comments:

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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

Site Number: **24 CA 1530**

ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

X See Additional Information Page

Architectural Style: **Streamline Moderne** If Other, specify:

Property Type: **Commercial** Specific Property Type: **Bus depot and garage**

Architect: **A. G. McIver** Architectural Firm/City/State: **McIver and Cohagen**

Builder/Contractor: **Engineering Dept., Northland Greyhound Lines** Company/City/State: **Great Falls, MT**

Source of Information: **2002 survey**

Location and setting. The GFT Transit Transfer Center – historically the Greyhound Bus Depot – is located at 326 1st Avenue South on the block bounded by 1st Avenue South on the north, 4th Street South on the east, 2nd Avenue South on the south, and 3rd Avenue south on the west. The building is located on the northeast corner of the block and faces onto the intersection of 1st Avenue South and 4th Street South. The building itself shields the interior of this lot, which is used for bus circulation, as it was historically. It is an urban site, close to the historic center of downtown Great Falls.

Materials. The Great Falls Greyhound Bus Depot is constructed of brick and concrete block (CMU) clad in terra cotta and polished marble tiles on the public facades. The central tower portion is wood frame, clad in tiles. Windows include plate glass with aluminum frames, glass block, and multi-light steel sash. There is an aluminum fascia on the rounded canopy on the building. Additional materials include neon and an internally-lit box sign. Original Interior finishes include terrazzo floors. The building is designed in the Streamline Moderne style and was constructed in 1947 (*Helms, 2002:1*).

Massing and design. The Great Falls Greyhound Bus Depot is a one and two-story building (the central portion is two stories) with an L-shaped footprint and a flat roof. The building is located at the back of the sidewalk at the intersection of 1st Avenue South and 4th Street South. The bus bays are located on the west side of the north façade, and are entered from 1st Avenue South, as they were historically. The buses then circulate in the interior center of the lot, and exit toward the east at the alley, as they did historically. The main pedestrian entry is at the corner, facing onto the intersection.

Front facades. The main features of the building are focused on the main entry. They include a shallow, wrap-around canopy with a tall aluminum fascia that continues on the north and east faces of the building, aligned with the upper edges (lintels) of windows and doors on these façades. The door at the corner, which features full-height glass with sidelight and transoms in an aluminum frame, is flanked by display cases with that are clad in tile at the lower level and have tall narrow lights set in canted frames at the upper level. Above the entry, mounted on the canopy, is the historic "Bus Depot" sign in free-standing letters. Above this is the contemporary sign for the building, which is a square, internally-lit box sign mounted on the curved building tower.

The large windows to each side of the entry are round where they 'point' to the main entry, and have aluminum mullions and muntins. Above the windows are the "Intermountain" signs, which are composed of free-standing letters with neon that are mounted on the building facades. On the west side of the north façade are the bus entry bays, which have roll-up metal doors. On the east façade is a secondary entry that has an aluminum door with full-height glass and a transom window in an aluminum frame. The walls to each side of this entry are curved at the street, and a tall glass block window is located to the right side. South of the door is a large, six-light fixed window.

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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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ARCHITECTURAL DESCRIPTION

The west façade of the building abuts the neighboring structure on 1st Street and is not visible. The south façade of the building, which narrows at this point, has a secondary entry with a flush door and transom window in a wood frame. To the left of this door is an opening that has been enclosed with the same tile cladding seen elsewhere on the building. To the left at the curved corner is another opening that is enclosed with sheet metal.

Rear facades. The rear facades of the building are brick and composed of three parts: The rear exit of the bus bays, on the west (left); a canted face in the middle that leads to the interior lobby; and to the right (east), the rear wall of what is now the office. The rear of the bus bays has no embellishments. The second level of the central portion of the rear façade extends over the first level, supported by three narrow metal posts. The upper level has three large, multi-light windows with steel sash and concrete sills. At the first level is an aluminum-frame door of full-height glass with a large sidelight to the right. There is one additional window on this façade, which is vertically oriented with eight lights in steel sash. Another three openings on this façade are filled in with brick. The easterly façade displays two large, nearly square, glass block windows with concrete sills.

Changes over time. According to the 2002 survey for the building, it was renovated in 1974. It was rehabilitated in 2001 in a way that preserves the historic character of the building. Sanborn maps show that the building has the same configuration that it did historically. A restaurant was located in what is now an office, on the east side of the building. A historic sign for the restaurant, the "Post House Grill," can be seen in the historic photograph (see sheet 9 of 14). The photograph also shows that historically the building had a sign in free-standing letters on the top of the central tower, which is consistent with the design of the building and more dramatic than the current box sign. It also had freestanding signs on the parapet with representations of greyhounds. The "Intermountain" sign was added when this business operated from the building.

The multi-light overhead doors that were likely wood doors have been replaced with contemporary overhead doors. The front entry door has been replaced. Some windows on the rear of the building have been enclosed, but these are minor changes.

The interior of the lobby has been renovated, but the major changes appear to be a new dropped ceiling and light fixtures. Internal partitions and finishes are what they were historically.

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

☒ See Additional Information Page

The following historic context was taken from the 2002 survey for this property by Candi Helms and Amy Hinshaw.

"These two lots were the original location of the Eclipse Stables and Carriages with weigh scales in the street of 1st Avenue South. Log sleeping rooms were located at the rear of the stables (*Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1888*).

It is significant that a more modern form of transportation, bussing, would eventually occupy these lots. The Depot, a 108 foot by 100 brick and tile building, was constructed in 1947 to cohesively [sic] fulfill an expanding population's transportation needs (*GTF Building Permits, Community Development Office*). Post WWII was the impetus for prosperity; veterans returning home became consumers and producers of products and services made unavailable by the war. Mass transit with a central location became crucial to the area. Previously, transit systems had operated sporadically and spread out in various locations of Great Falls. The construction of the Depot ensured a dependable form of transportation. Because it was constructed and operated by a major bus line, Greyhound, the bus service connected all of the outlying areas making transportation throughout Montana an easy and comfortable task.

INFORMATION SOURCES/BIBLIOGRAPHY

☐ See Additional Information Page

Bowker, R. R., *American Architects Directory* (First edition). Bowker LLC/American Institute of Architects, 1956 (Second edition, 1962; Third edition, 1970).

"Businesses," and "Transportation" files, Cascade County Historical Society, accessed April 2010.

Helms, Candi and Amy Hinshaw, "Bus Depot and Garage," *Cascade County-Montana Architectural and Historical Inventory*. On file, Montana State Office of Historic Preservation, accessed April 2010.

Sanborn Fire Insurance maps, 1929 updated to 1950; 1929 re-published in 1957.

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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

In the 1950s, the Depot offered customers tasty meals at the Post House Grill and access to the "luxury lines" such as the Glacier Transit Co. In those years, the Depot was at the height of service with the addition of the Great Falls Coach Lines Co., and Intermountain Transportation Co. (*Polk Directories, 1953, 1956*).

The Intermountain Transportation Co. was founded in Anaconda in 1917 by Emil and Alfred Torgerson. They had buses operating between Butte and Anaconda and three employees. By 1959, they had 42 buses serving 1326 miles of Montana with a total of 75 employees (*Ad, Diamond Jubilee Edition, Great Falls Tribune, November, 11, 1959, p. 8*)."

The Architect

Note: The following profile of the architectural firm from the 2002 survey indicates that McIver and Cohagen designed the building, based on building permit information. According to AIA Directory information, McIver and Cohagen were associated from 1915 to 1926, whereas this building was constructed in 1947 (*Bowker, 1970*). (Note that the firm McIver and Cohagen was formed in 1919. Prior to that the firm was known as McIver, Cohagen & Marshall). It is assumed here that McIver, who was based in Great Falls, designed the building. It is assumed that Cohagen, who was based in Billings, was not involved in the design work.

The design of the building is attributed to local architects, McIver and Cohagen. Their firm was established in 1919 in Billings; McIver was in charge of the Great Falls branch. This firm was responsible for the designing of several civic and business buildings in the North Central Montana region. Its Great Falls accomplishments include the Paris, Duval, Buscher, Graham Buildings, the First Presbyterian Church, and the old International Airport Buildings. As a member of the State Board of Architectural Examiners and one of only two Montana men elected to "fellow" status by the American Institute of Architects, McIver influenced the development of architecture in this region (Helms, 2002).

Angus Vaughn McIver was born in Great Falls, Montana on April 29, 1892. He studied civil engineering at the University of Michigan, from which he earned a bachelor's degree in civil engineering. McIver practiced with several other architects over time, including Chandler Cohagen, William Hess, and Knute Haugsjaa. He practiced with Cohagen from 1915 to 1926 (*Bowker, 1970*).

He undertook a range of types of commissions, including institutional and educational work. Among McIver's best known works are the Veteran's Hospital in Miles City; the Veterans & Pioneers Memorial Building in Helena; Air Force Housing at Malmstrom Air Force Base; the Lewis & Clark School in Great Falls, a number of elementary schools, and Russell Art Gallery in Great Falls; the Renne Library and the Men's Dormitory at Montana State University at Bozeman; and the Scottish Rite Temple in Great Falls. He was honored as a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects in 1949. He died in 1974.

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HISTORY OF PROPERTY

Architectural Context

The Great Falls Bus Depot and Garage is considered historically significant for its role in the history of transportation in Great Falls (*Helms, 2002*), but also because it is one of the few intact Streamline Moderne buildings in Great Falls. The following statement on the Streamline Moderne style is taken from the historic plaque on the building.

"Streamline Moderne architecture celebrated America's engineering prowess. The style—which offered an optimistic response to the woes of the Great Depression—promised a better future through technology. Its celebration of speed and efficiency provided a perfect match for Greyhound Lines, which adopted the style as part of its corporate identity. Founded in 1914, the bus company built dozens of Streamline Moderne depots during its dramatic post-World War II expansion, including this one in 1947. Complementing the sleek aesthetic of Greyhound's Silverside buses, the depots incorporated modern materials, including glass block and aluminum, which gave the buildings a progressive feel. In typical streamlined fashion, the depots hugged the ground while their smooth, aerodynamic surfaces, rounded corners, and curved plate-glass windows echoed the company's commitment to fast, efficient transportation. The site of the Great Falls depot had once housed a livery stable. After 1947, it provided access to a more modern form of transportation, conveniently located near the city center."

As noted, the Great Falls Bus Depot and Garage, while unique in Great Falls, was part of a national trend. Bus stations with very similar styling can be seen in Billings, Montana, designed by J. G. Link & Co. and in Buffalo, New York, as well as other locations around the country. The Post House Grill restaurant that was historically located in the Great Falls Bus Depot and Garage is also a name associated with other Greyhound stations, including the station in Greyhound Key, Florida (Post House Hotel and Restaurant) and Belvidere, New Jersey (Post House Fine Foods).

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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

NRHP Listing Date:

NRHP Eligibility: ☒ Yes ☐ No ☐ Individually ☒ Contributing to Historic District ☐ Noncontributing to Historic District

NRHP Criteria: ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Area of Significance: **Transportation, architecture** Period of Significance: **1947**

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

☐ See Additional Information Page

The following statement of significance is taken from the 2002 survey for the building. The Greyhound Bus Depot and Garage is listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

"This structure qualifies as a primary element to a historic district under National Register Criterion A (associative value) within a potential historic district due to its association with the development of the mass transportation industry in Great Falls. It was the first location of a bus depot; a form of transportation popularized by price and service. The building also qualifies under National Register Criterion C (design or construction value) because it is an excellent example of Moderne' architecture with wonderfully retained architectural integrity. The curved walls and windows with chrome accents are typical of the style which was favored in mass transportation design. It is also significant because of its association with locally famous architects" (*Helms, 2002*).

INTEGRITY

☐ See Additional Information Page

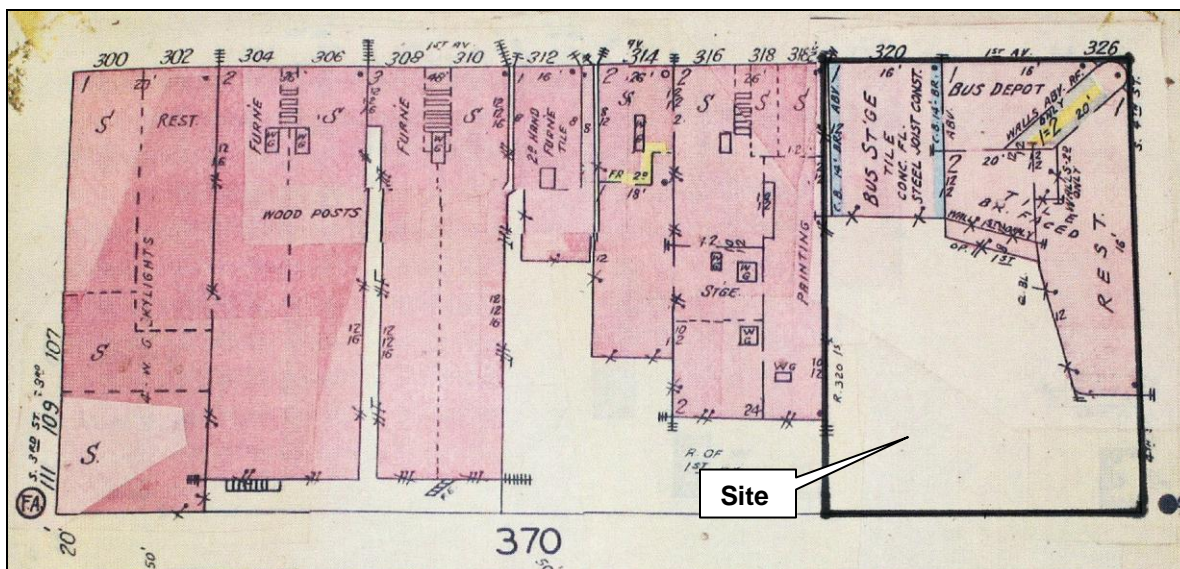
The Great Falls Bus Depot and Garage retains integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. Only minor changes appear to have taken place on the building, including some changes in signage and filling in some windows on the rear façade. It is still used as a bus depot.

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Sanborn Fire Insurance map, 1929 re-published in 1957



Billings Greyhound Station by J. G. Link & Co.

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PHOTOGRAPHS

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Description: **Historic photograph of Greyhound Bus Depot, Great Falls (n.d.)**



Description: **North and east facades, viewed from intersection**

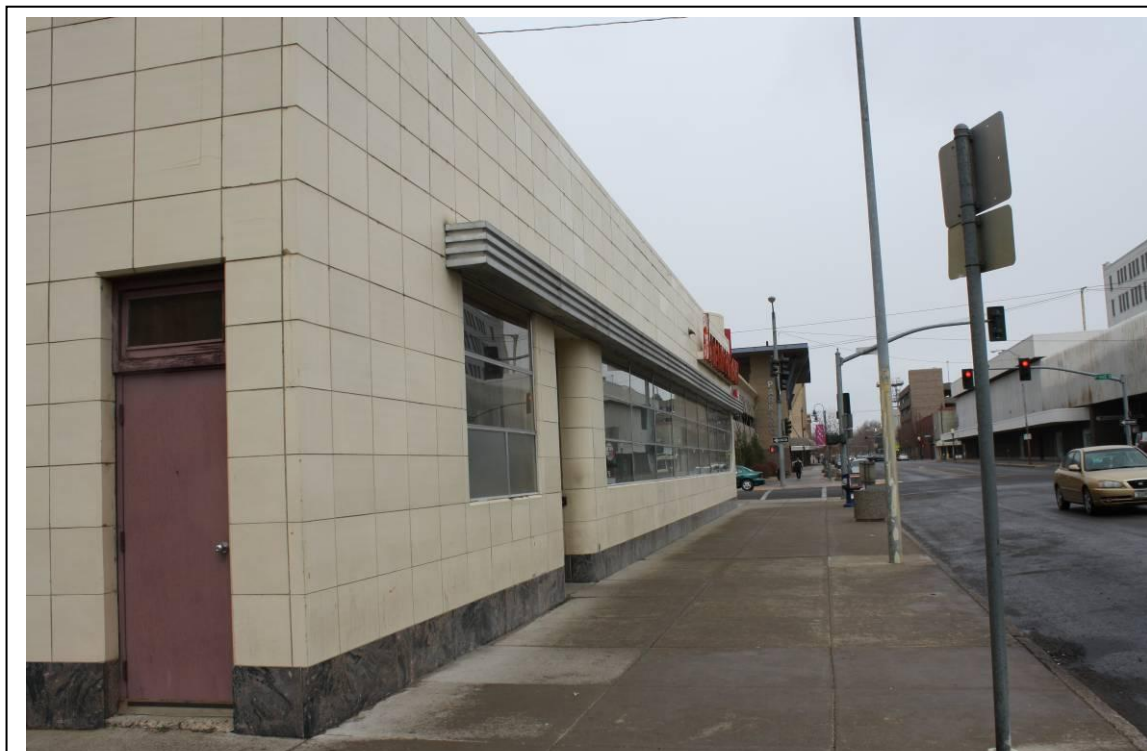
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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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Description: **North façade, viewed from northeast**



Description: **East and partial south façade, viewed from southeast**

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Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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Description: **Rear facade, central and east side**

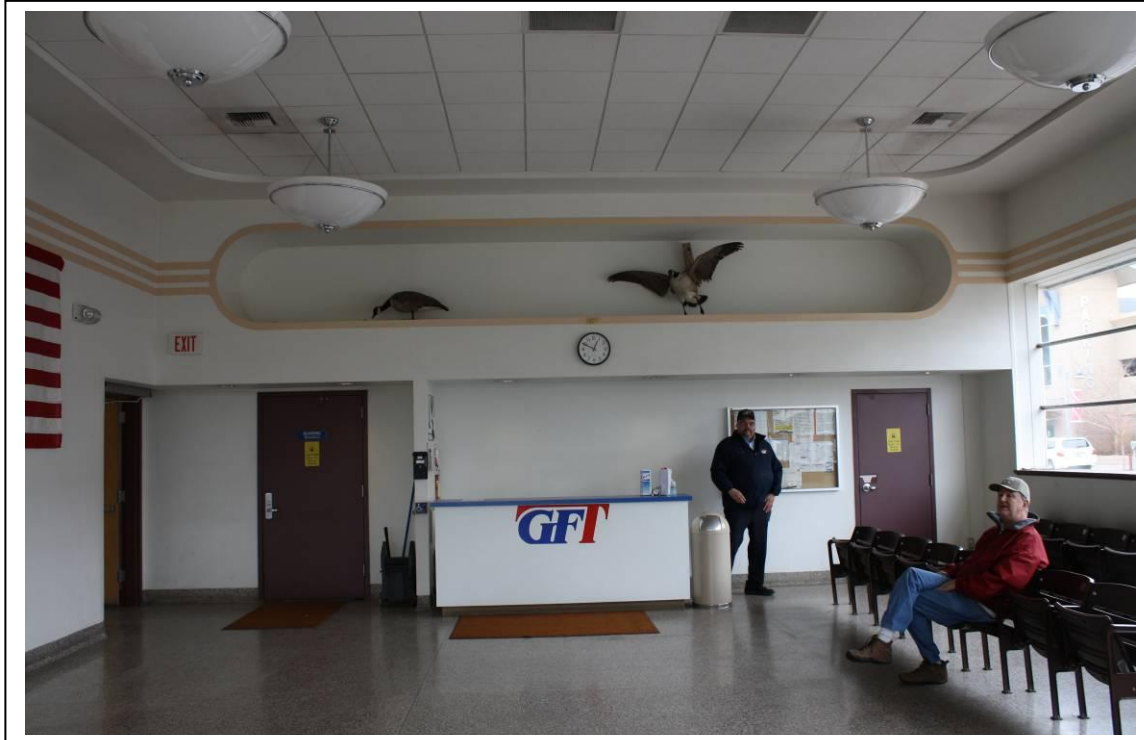


Description: **Rear facade, west side**

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PHOTOGRAPHS

Property Name: **Bus Depot and Garage**

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Description: **Interior, looking west**

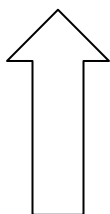
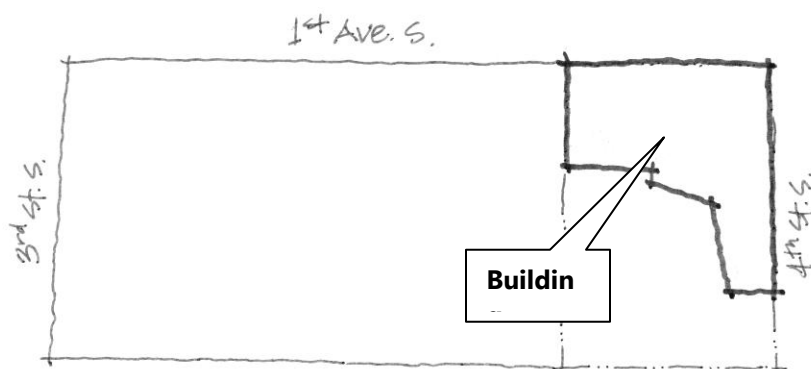


Description: **Interior, looking east**

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
SKETCH MAP

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North

MONTANA HISTORIC PROPERTY RECORD
TOPOGRAPHIC MAP

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